

Unit 5: The Role of the NI Justice System



Lesson 2: The Prison Service of Northern Ireland

This lesson requires pupils to think about the prison system. It allows them to explore prison life and the impact it can have on prisoners, as well as a number of issues that can affect life behind bars.

Planning	
Prior Learning	<p>Pupils should have gained prior knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • justice and lawfulness; and • the role of the Northern Ireland justice system.
Learning Outcomes	<p>Pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differentiate between the different types of prisons that operate in Northern Ireland; • evaluate a day in the life of a prison inmate; and • identify ways in which problems facing our prisons and prison inmates could be overcome.
Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Focus	<p>Pupils will have opportunities to develop the following:</p> <p>Managing Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with a sense of audience and purpose <p>Being Creative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from and value other people's ideas • Challenge the routine method <p>Working with Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively and share ideas and opinions • Adapt behaviour and language to suit different people and situations <p>Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make links between cause and effect • Examine options and weigh up pros and cons.
Attitudes and Dispositions	<p>Pupils will be encouraged to develop the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to new ideas • Personal feelings about ideas • Concern for others.

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Resources

Animation: *The Role of the Northern Ireland Justice System*

Unit 5: Lesson 2 Resource A – Prisons in Northern Ireland

Unit 5: Lesson 2 Resource B – Question cards

Blank paper
Pens
Post-it notes

An account of prison life, for example:

- [‘A former prisoner reveals what everyday life was like in prisons’](http://www.metro.co.uk/2017/05/29/a-former-prisoner-reveals-what-everyday-life-was-like-in-prisons-6661489)
www.metro.co.uk/2017/05/29/a-former-prisoner-reveals-what-everyday-life-was-like-in-prisons-6661489
- [‘Life in a young offenders’ institution’](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/nov/21/young-offenders-institution-ashfield)
www.theguardian.com/society/2011/nov/21/young-offenders-institution-ashfield
- [‘A day in the life of a prisoner’](http://www.psmag.com/news/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-prisoner)
www.psmag.com/news/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-prisoner
- [‘Young offender institutions’](http://www.themix.org.uk/crime-and-safety/in-trouble/young-offender-institutions-9339.html)
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Suggested teaching and learning strategies

Launch

Lead a class discussion, using prompt questions and effective questioning techniques:

1. **What is the role of the Northern Ireland justice system?**
2. **What is the role of the prison service in Northern Ireland?**
3. **Do you think that prisons do a good job of rehabilitating offenders?**
4. **Can you name any prisons within Northern Ireland?**

You may now wish to show the animation *The Role of the Northern Ireland Justice System*.

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. *To protect the people of Northern Ireland and ensure that when someone has committed a crime they are dealt with fairly*
2. *To house people who have committed serious crimes and help to rehabilitate offenders so that when they are released, they do not commit any future crimes*
3. **Yes** – *they keep people who have committed serious crimes away from society so that they cannot hurt anyone else; they help to give the offenders time to think about what they did; they help teach new skills so people can spend their time more wisely in the future.*
4. **No** – *a lot of people who come out of prison end up reoffending; prisons aren't doing much to help people change their ways.*
5. *Hydebank, Magilligan and Maghaberry*

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Activities

Activity 1: Types of prison

- Use **Resource A** to discuss the three different types of prison that are operational in Northern Ireland.
- Facilitate a class discussion on the pupils' understanding of the differences between a high, medium and low security prison. Extend the discussion to ask what types of offences might cause you to end up in each.

Possible answers and discussion points:

- A high security prison is where people who have committed the most serious crimes go. These might include murder, grievous bodily harm and kidnap.
- A medium security prison is where people who have committed reasonably serious crimes go. These might include minor assaults and small-scale theft.
- A low security prison probably doesn't look like a normal prison with bars. It is probably where people who have committed the least serious crimes go, as well as those under 18 (children) who have committed a crime.

Activity 2: A day in the life of a prisoner

- Ask the pupils what they think a day in the life of a prisoner would look like. As a class, come up with a possible short timeline of events and display it on the whiteboard.

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. Wake up at 6 or 7am
2. Clean cell
3. Have breakfast (alone or with other inmates)
4. Do daily chores
5. Have free time in the exercise yard
6. Have lunch
7. Attend a class
8. Do daily chores
9. Have dinner
10. Do daily chores
11. Have some free time
12. Go to bed around 9pm

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- Divide the pupils into groups of about four or five. Give each group a copy of an account of life in a prison or young offender institution. You may wish to research your own account or use one of the following, if appropriate for your class (please note that these do not relate specifically to Northern Ireland):
 - [‘A former prisoner reveals what everyday life was like in prisons’](#)
from www.metro.co.uk
 - [‘Life in a young offenders’ institution’](#)
from www.theguardian.com
 - [‘A day in the life of a prisoner’](#)
from www.psmag.com
 - [‘Young offender institutions’](#)
from www.themix.org.uk
- Highlight that daily routines will vary from prison to prison. Ask the pupils to read their article, discuss it and compare it to the timeline of events they came up with as a class. Where possible, ask them to write three key points that are different from what they expected.
- Give each group an opportunity to feed back their findings and discuss them with the rest of the class.

Activity 3: Hot seating

- Explain to the class that they are going to engage in a hot seating activity, and ask for three volunteers. Each will play a role: prison inmate, prison guard, or family member of the inmate. Include additional characters if you wish.
- Invite the class to ask questions to the three people in the hot seat, who must respond in character. For example, they might ask:
 1. Prison inmate – what crime did you commit?
 2. Prison guard – is it difficult to make sure all of the inmates are where they are supposed to be at different times of the day?
 3. Family member – how do you feel about your loved one being locked up?

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. *I stole a car and went joyriding with my mates. It was a right laugh at the time, but now that I’m in here it doesn’t seem so funny anymore. I didn’t realise the effect that my actions would have on other people.*
2. *It all depends on the number of prisoners you have at any one time. When we’re at full capacity it can sometimes be difficult, especially if you have one or two characters who like to try and break the rules. Generally, though, we have a good handling on things and there are strict guidelines that all inmates have to follow to make sure they are in the right place at the right time each day.*

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3. *I'm devastated. I relied on Johnny to help me out at home and now that he's not there I find the day-to-day thing difficult. I just wish he'd thought about what he was doing before he decided to steal that car. I'm constantly wondering if I could have done anything to stop him from ending up this way.*

- After the pupils have asked a reasonable amount of questions, bring the activity to a close. Facilitate a short discussion on what they thought about the activity and whether it has helped them to understand different people's points of view.

Activity 4: Question cards

- Ask the pupils to return to their groups, and give a question card from **Resource B** to each group. Give them time to come up with an answer.
- Provide paper for the pupils to write down their ideas. Encourage them to elect a scribe, a time keeper, and someone to feed back their ideas to the class.
- Facilitate a whole-class discussion, asking focused questions throughout.

Possible answers and discussion points:

– **Card 1**

Yes – *we should do more to give all prisoners an experience of daily productive and meaningful activity. This will help the prisoners' mental health.*

No – *if they are locked up in prison, they are there for a reason. They should be prepared to stay locked up in a small space as punishment for the crimes they committed. They have hurt someone or something, and they should be involved in mundane activities. Prison shouldn't be fun.*

– **Card 2**

Yes – *they should be treated with respect and we should allow them to have free time to talk to others, especially professionals who could help them through their mental health problems.*

No – *we should not do anything to make their time in prison more manageable because they committed a crime and they need to pay the price. If their mental health is suffering they need to deal with this on their own, as this will make them think twice about committing future crimes.*

– **Card 3**

Yes – *when you commit a crime you lose your right to freedom and space. You need to be prepared to pay for the crime you committed, even if it means some discomfort.*

No – *tension could build up and fights might start. It could also be very unhygienic, and people could pass germs to each other easily.*

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– Card 4

Yes – a lot of drugs seem to find their way into prisons and there are only a few people, prison guards included, who could bring them in. They should be checked to make sure that these harmful substances don't get into prisoners' hands.

No – prison guards are professional people doing their job, and they would be acting in an irresponsible way if they brought drugs into a prison. It would only make their job harder trying to keep control over the prisoners.

– Card 5

Yes – 'prisons' is an outdated term. If we are living in modern times, there is probably a better name for a prison so that it does not sound so scary for people who may have to go and whose crime is not very serious.

No – 'prisons' is what they are. There is no point in trying to sugar-coat something like this, as it would dull down the seriousness of the nature of prison. People need to be put off committing crimes for fear of ending up there.

Debrief

Explain to the pupils that part of the reason why prisons exist is to promote confidence in people that justice is being served. Discuss the following:

Are there better ways of dealing with crime and promoting confidence in the justice system outside the traditional prison system?

Allow the pupils to work in pairs to come up with an answer, write it on a Post-it note and stick it to the whiteboard. Then read out the different responses.

Possible answers and discussion points:

Yes – some crimes are reasonably small, so people should be made to do community service or something to help the victim instead of going to prison.

No – the idea of prison is the best deterrent. People are scared of going to prison, so the average person does not commit any crimes in their lifetime because they would be terrified to end up in one.

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Unit 5: Lesson 2 Resource A Prisons in Northern Ireland

If you are remanded in custody or given a custodial sentence, you will be held in one of the three operational prison establishments in Northern Ireland.

Maghaberry

A high security prison, housing adult male long-term sentenced and remand prisoners in both separated and integrated conditions.

Magilligan

A medium security prison, housing shorter-term adult male prisoners. It also has low security accommodation (Foylerview) for selected prisoners nearing the end of their sentence.

Hydebank Wood

The college, which has a focus on education, learning and employment, accommodates young people between the ages of 18 and 21. It also accommodates female remand and sentenced prisoners in Ash House, a housing block within the complex.

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Unit 5: Lesson 2 Resource B

Question cards

Card 1

Should we encourage all prisoners to take part in productive work or leisure activities away from their cells?

Card 2

Should we treat prisoners with mental health problems differently? If so, what could be done to meet their needs and make their time in prison more manageable?

Card 3

Is it appropriate that so many prisoners are placed together in small spaces designed for single occupation?

Card 4

Should prison officers undergo spot checks for drugs in the same way that prisoners are checked for drug use?

Card 5

Should we stop calling prisons 'prisons' to reshape people's attitudes to them?

